

Conclusion

Social Policy in a Time of Uncertainty

Mario Torres A.



Societies differ in resources, culture, tradition, wealth, and political power. The same could be said of people. Despite these differences, societies and people share the potential to develop and overcome historical limitations. It is not easy to define this capacity for change in the 1990s, but it includes the expectations, beliefs, and values that cause people to look ahead, to take actions, and to hope that tomorrow will be different, better, and more rewarding than today. This capacity, not easy to measure, is often behind most processes of human change from the migration to urban centres to changes in social mobility, from cultural assimilation to political mobilization, or to the emergence of new forms of community organization. One of the main challenges of the current human development approach is to make this capacity the driving force for social reform.

Social policies are an effective means to face this challenge. Although there is no question about the importance of measures such as antipoverty programs, social integration efforts, political reforms, and employment programs, more than ever before there is an urgent need to design and implement social policies that explicitly address the goals of human development. This means that the conception and operation of social policies must be looked at from a holistic, integrated perspective. This in itself is a major challenge under the prevailing circumstances of crisis of development paradigms, social frustration, economic incertitude, political disorientation, and external conditions, particularly in developing countries. At the same time, however, it seems that more than ever before these countries have means and opportunities at their disposal to improve the social and human development conditions of their societies.

ARCHIV
T...
no. 5

This perception, perhaps optimistic, emerges, in part, as a result of examining the social reform processes — decentralization, institutional reform and, democratization — under way in countries like Canada and those of the Latin American region. The differences among these countries are indeed many, and common conclusions about these societies, their social reform approaches, and their policy systems cannot be easily drawn from a comparative perspective. In spite of these differences, however, there are also similarities that help to identify lessons and, above all, to draw words of caution about the opportunities and pitfalls that can be faced in social policymaking in a world where globalization has become the predominant context of human development.

The following sections focus on some of the strategic areas for the analysis and research on social policy that have emerged from the previous chapters. Although the reality of social reform in Canada and Latin America is too fluid to provide an exhaustive overview of the issues, opportunities, and prospects these countries face, an attempt is made to outline the main points to help set a research agenda on the principal topics related to social reform, the policymaking processes, the economic factors influencing social policymaking, and the needs for policy evaluation. Some ideas are also advanced about how a multifaceted research strategy might contribute by providing timely and relevant knowledge to reduce the current uncertainty affecting public policy in these countries.¹

Some Contextual Factors

The chapters in this publication by Filgueira and Lombardi and Morales-Gómez show that some of the countries in Latin America have experienced considerable progress on the economic front. They also show that most countries in the region have gone through painful attempts to reach stabilization and macroeconomic equilibria. The social progress attained through this process, however, has been limited. In most countries of the region, poverty continues to be deeply rooted in persistent social, cultural, political, and economic inequalities. This situation has put even the viability of productive transformation

¹ This chapter was written taking into account the content of previous chapters, comments prepared by discussants (available in mimeograph form from IDRC), and from contributions made during the seminar discussions. Explicit reference is made only in selected cases.

under question. As a result, there is a new emphasis on the need to implement more effective and efficient social policies. This presents the region with new risks including a wave of future indebtedness resulting from the flow of multilateral funds for social reform programs. In the future, this will be a major issue in relation to the economics of social policy.

This is happening at a time when the countries of Latin America do not seem to have a clear sense of direction in the implementation of their social reforms. A key question in this context is the extent to which actions currently under way in the social sectors will move the region toward a more profound and just change of their social policy system, or if they will simply lead to a relative decrease in poverty to more manageable levels, leaving more or less untouched enduring mechanisms of unequal distribution of income and wealth.

This, however, is not only a dilemma of the less-developed countries of Latin America. Although different, no less worrisome are the dilemmas Canada is facing. Social policy in Canada emerged around the model of a just society where equity and the welfare state model of western European countries were points of reference. Changes promoted by the new economic model, however, based on openness and economic integration have affected the existing social security system. Under these circumstances, the renegotiation of the federal political model, the "new social contract" and the status of indigenous populations, among others, will have great influence on the reshaping of the Canadian model. To respond to the demands for the reform of a well-crystallized social policy system, Canada needs to take drastic steps to overcome potential social fragmentation and to eliminate existing mechanisms of social exclusion (Hicks, this volume). For Canada, the response to these challenges is of particular importance under the current circumstances where national integration is a major issue and regional integration and globalization are likely to continue affecting its economic and social-welfare policies.

In Latin America, the results of a prolonged economic crisis, the new impacts of globalization, and the conditions of persistent poverty are having a profound affect on the social policy system in the region. Filgueira and Lombardi (this volume) indicate that social policy systems in the region are moving from a universal, public, centralized framework to more focused, private, and

decentralized programs. It is not clear, however, how this new social policy model will lead to a more equitable, integrated, and participatory society. Similar changes in other areas, such as in labour market deregulations, have raised questions about the impact these measures have on the structure and role of labour market institutions, associated social security systems, labour organizations, and labour mobility.

Until now, social policies and social programs in the region played the role of economic stabilizers and compensatory redistribution instruments. Today, they are beginning to be recognized as having a different role given the relative stagnation and the difficulties for recovery resulting from structural adjustment policies. It is because of these concerns that the current social reform debate is broadening the focus of social policies from traditional sectoral approaches and poverty alleviation programs toward a more comprehensive and integrated view of social, human, and economic development.

This, however, is not an easy task. Together with the prevailing doubts about the direction social reform should take in the region, there is also a lack of clarity about what social policies really are and what their objectives should be. Among the possible social policy aims are the reduction of poverty, increase of equity, facilitation of economic growth and promotion of competitiveness, promotion of social and cultural integration, and expansion and consolidation of citizenship.

Raczynski (1994) reflects these types of concerns when she identifies the following four questions as those in need of urgent response: What are the latent and manifest functions of social policies in relation to issues such as social integration, social control, legitimization of the political order, poverty eradication, equity, equal opportunities, democracy, and the strengthening of citizenship? Where should social policies be placed in relation to other development policies, including economic and environmental? What is the impact of social policies in the shaping of the overall social structure? What are the opportunities for social change, i.e., social mobility, participation, and more transparent forms of governance, that social policies create?

For the most part, responses to these questions are difficult to find, in part because social policies are no longer a national, domestic issue. In the 1990s,

social policies are more a factor in the process of social reform in the context of globalization.

As discussed earlier, globalization can have positive impacts, including the growing integration of international markets for goods, services and finance. In the North, globalization can also lead to new forms of inequality resulting from shifts in the structure and cohesion of key social institutions such as the family. It can also result in an increasing public awareness of the costs of social systems and programs, in a growing sense of social insecurity, in the emergence of an underclass, and in the reduction of the opportunities for younger generations (Banting, this volume).

Similar situations can be observed in Latin America, particularly in countries with a large middle class. In these countries, the impact of globalization broadens the gap between social classes and affects the state's capacity to allocate fiscal resources to the social policy systems. But what happens in these countries also has a social impact beyond the borders of the countries of Latin America. Low-paid labour and unemployment, for example, have an affect in the polarization of the socioeconomic situation for workers in Canada.

In this regard, harmonization and convergence of social policy systems is an issue that requires careful examination (Berry, this volume). Economic integration, international labour force mobility, and capital flows among countries and areas of economic integration (i.e., the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), Mercado Comun del Sur (MERCOSUR)) will make it necessary to adapt social policy systems to circumstances that fall outside national boundaries of influence. The situation becomes particularly complex because these external pressures on convergence and harmonization of policies coincide with efforts to reduce social costs while expanding protection. An emerging intellectual and political debate is beginning to question who should pay the costs of social reform in the context of globalization and simultaneous domestic constraints. Should the onus for adapting to globalization and for reaching greater internal efficiency be put on the individual, the family and the community, or should it be on the international system, the business sector, and the state?

Despite these uncertainties, some progress is being made in terms of developing a new framework for social policymaking and social policy research

that could help to clarify the role of the state and the civil society or the responsibilities of individuals in the implementation of the social reform processes in the context of globalization. Because of the complexity of the issues, it is likely that a new framework for social reform will not easily emerge in the near future. The challenge that countries like Canada and those of Latin America face in implementing social reform is to move from a domestic-oriented welfare state approach to social policies to a more comprehensive model. This model would take into account the global economic factors at play while maintaining social justice, equipping citizens with better skills and learning capacities for dealing with economic and technological change, building new forms of political participation, and balancing global demands with domestic priorities.

This challenge makes the need for analysis and evaluation of existing policies and programs and the need for learning experiences in social reform from a comparative perspective even more urgent. To fill this gap, it is necessary to develop a holistic approach in the analysis of social reform.

Social Reform

One of the hardest problems Canada and Latin America face in their attempts to implement social reforms is to provide more effective social services with constrained resources. One of the central concerns, therefore, is to design social policies that are primarily geared toward expanding people's opportunities. How to achieve this goal is perhaps one of the most critical challenges.

Efforts are being made in several directions including social reform processes involving reconceptualization and reorganization of social security systems, the dismantling of key institutions and the creation of others based on a combination of public and private sector activities, changes in central and local government responsibilities, and new approaches to consensus building and social participation. These processes, however, are taking place without a specific model. To a large extent, it could be argued that the new model of social reform is taking shape as the process moves along.

In Canada, one of the main concerns in the social reform process is the need to adjust a consolidated welfare state to the new circumstances of globalization and regional integration in such a way that it could respond better

to the demands of a changing labour market and family structure. In most Latin American countries, because the welfare state never became fully crystallized, the main challenge to the social reform process is the building up of equity with constrained economic, human and institutional resources, and deeply rooted social inequality.

In such a context, a key issue is not only the eradication of poverty but how to make a new development model viable in social, political, and cultural terms. This is not an easy task. Social reform is taking place while internally oriented economies based on import substitution are shifting to become open economies driven by international competitiveness and privatization efforts. Although in some of these countries adjustment policies have proven to be effective in controlling fiscal deficit and inflation, they need to focus their attention on the new society and on the long-term social processes triggered by these policies and by the changes that have occurred in the development model (Vergara 1994).

Given these experiences in the region, the examination of social reform, both in Canada and in Latin America, may raise important, common conceptual and policy lessons. Cross-country analyses may help to clarify issues such as the targeting of social programs, social integration, decentralization, strengthening of local administration in search of greater efficiency, and in directing investment in human capital. It should be underlined, however, that this type of analysis also has limitations. Conceptual and policy commonalities across countries do not necessarily show ready-to-apply responses in realities that remain fundamentally different.

On the one hand, the need to redesign the Canadian social policy system seems to emerge primarily as a response to macroeconomic changes and to changes in the social fibre of the society. One of the challenges found in this regard is the harmonization between the changes in the society at large and the reorganization of the welfare state in a federal-provincial context. The difficulty is to design nationally coherent social policy instruments in a context of political decentralization. On the other hand, in Latin America, there is no well-established tradition of a welfare state. Critical social changes like the demographic transition and the incorporation of women into the labour force, already in effect in Canada,

are still in progress in the South. Additionally, in Latin America, social reform is taking place in a context in which almost 40% of the population is poor. Thus, the key issue is deep redesigning of the social policy systems in place rather than that of adaptation of the Canadian system.

Despite these differences, the comparison of the processes and conditions of social reform in Canada and Latin America highlights some important common problems. First, the lack of flexibility of social welfare institutions is often one of the major obstacles for the achievement of greater effectiveness. In Canada, this is of special significance given the fragmentation of social programs. This implies that focusing only on improving delivery systems is not sufficient (Hunsley 1994). A similar situation exists in Latin America, where sectoral programs tend to overlap among themselves and with nongovernmental organization (NGO) activities. Social reform will thus need to focus on issues such as the interface between unemployment, training, social security, and antipoverty programs, the latter in the case of Latin America. To deal with this lack of relative institutional flexibility, it will be necessary to reach a new social consensus and to implement practices of collective bargaining that could permit some degree of control over the impact of the social reform on the economy and the general well-being.

Second, the emphasis on targeting of social programs may have potential negative impacts if, as a result of targeting, less importance is given to reorienting universal policies and to self-help programs, including retraining and productive loan programs. A consequence of this in Canada, for example, could be the development of a growing underground or informal economy. In Latin America, in addition to the foregoing, one consequence may be the strengthening of clientelism and the development of a culture of poverty. These consequences may have additional negative effects on tax revenue capacity.

For a number of reasons, there are increasing doubts about giving less importance to universal social policies than to targeted programs. Targeting has limitations as an instrument for poverty alleviation because of its individual rather than family or community focus. There are risks of exacerbating social inequalities by differentiating between social services for the poor and the rest of society and targeting vulnerable groups may become too costly given that these groups are often politically weak, lack intermediary organizations, and have a culture of

economic dependency (Raczynski 1994). Targeted and universal policies should complement each other as they serve different purposes, have different mechanisms, and require distinct organizational frameworks.

Third, in Canada and in Latin America, there are similar economic, political, and institutional limitations at the local and central government levels to conduct social reform processes. In the case of most Latin American countries, however, one of the major constraints is in the availability of qualified human resources. The result is a weak pool of the necessary capacity required to conduct social reform processes and implement new social policies.

Fourth, despite the important differences between the federal and provincial tradition in Canada and the centralism of Latin American countries, which makes policy decentralization a process with very different content in both areas, the civil society is acquiring a new importance in relation to the decentralization processes. In addition to local and central capacities, the involvement of the civil society is critical to achieve effective political, administrative, and financial decentralization and make local development an effective instrument of social reform. The participation and empowerment of local actors and community organizations are integral to ensuring accountability in the process of decentralization.

Fifth, both in Canada and in Latin American countries the role of national cultures, values, and institutions is critical in the long-term sustainability of social reform processes and in the implementation of effective social policies. They are mutually reinforcing, shaping each other in the processes of reform (Kesselman 1994).

Policymaking Process

Social policy has many implementation problems. Given the scarcity of resources and institutional bottlenecks, these difficulties require urgent attention. There is a need to examine the approaches and mechanisms to prioritize among different social policies such as antipoverty programs, sectoral policies (education, health, shelter, labour, and social security), labour force training programs, and the strengthening of popular organizations in terms of access to information and decision-making. In this context, research is required to study the extent to which, under constrained economic, human, and institutional resources, the policymaking

process can become one of the principal mechanisms for equitable allocation of resources.

The availability of funds alone is often a necessary but insufficient condition for good social policymaking. In practice, some of the main problems lie in the processes of making policies and in implementing them. For this reason, further analyses are required about the involvement of various social actors in decision-making and the processes that allow or impede their involvement.

There is also a need to understand some of the critical issues regarding the risks in overcoming program fragmentation and reaching increased efficiency. Thus, for example, how to surmount sectoral approaches to reach policy integration, how to manage macro-micro tensions to reach higher levels of policy coordination between central and local government levels, and how to bring together the public and the private sector, including NGOs and grass-root organizations, are some of the issues that need careful study. In a democratic context, these issues need to be addressed through appropriate mechanisms for administering conflict and reaching consensus.

Analyses should be carried out on the available means to adopt a holistic approach in articulating more effectively the various stages of the policymaking process in social reform. This includes the design, implementation, monitoring, and the evaluation of policy harmonization to address social needs under circumstances of constrained resources.

There is also a need to identify the crucial factors that will improve transparency and accountability. In this regard, study of the new role of local governments is critical as well as the role of information and communication for the participation of new social actors. The local level is where social policies come together and where their interactions and results can be measured, yet, traditional social policy analysis remains national in perspective.

Finally, a better understanding is required of the role of local agents and their instruments in the processes of policymaking. In Latin America, this aspect is particularly important given the tendency there to reproduce traditional bureaucratic and clientelistic practices. This implies the need for a better understanding of the role of new actors in social policymaking, some being linked to the new processes of change resulting from globalization, integration, and

liberalization. In Canada, for example, new political movements, business-sector organizations, community organizations, and professional associations are now playing mediating roles in federal-provincial relations. In Latin America, the situation is similar with the addition of multilateral international agencies that play a very dominant role.

Economics of Social Policy

Program effectiveness and the concern for reducing costs should be stressed as a key strategic element in dealing with social policy reform in an environment of constrained resources. The financing of social policies and programs needs to be examined in the light of issues such as the fiscal deficit, increased tax revenues, reallocation of existing tax revenues, fees for service, and the use of resources from international donors. There is a need to understand the economics of providing different kinds of social services and making that provision effective. This knowledge is indispensable as a basis to evaluations of the relative cost-effectiveness of social measures (Hakim and Puryear 1994). Ultimately, the selection of a particular combination of financing measures may depend on a number of political and administrative considerations.

Some key issues that need to be addressed are, first, the political and administrative capacity for expanding tax collection and fiscal resources. What groups, for example, are most likely to be affected and what type of consensus building may be required to implement tax reforms? Second, the shifting of resources between or within programs as a means to reallocate resources among priorities requires assessing the potential negative impacts on programs and groups from which resources are reallocated. Third, the introduction of changes in financial arrangements for the achievement of new social policy objectives requires assessing the potential impact of restructuring financial incentives and the potential role of the private sector in the financing of social services. What are the financial pay-offs of reforming and privatizing social programs? Another question that needs further examination is whether privatization can play a role as an expansion of the state, as in the case of private organizations delivering services with fiscal funds. This implies assessing when it is more appropriate to encourage participation of the private sector and if it implies greater effectiveness. Fourth,

the promotion of efficiency in the delivering of social services and its impact on their effectiveness requires an understanding of when and under what circumstances and to what extent greater efficiency is conducive to achieving the best policy results.

The analyses of these issues should consider that the handling of incentives is also a powerful social policy instrument. In this regard, Kesselman (1994) mentions some interesting cases of policy implications when pursuing efficiency in the financing of social services.

One case is the incentives that the financing of social programs may exert for efficient behaviour on both sides of the market, the suppliers and users of services, such as through loans to universities and students with income-contingent repayment programs. A second case is the delivery mechanism for public cash transfers to the working poor and employable persons on welfare, tied directly to incentives, training, and work effort. These types of mechanisms may avoid reinforcing dependence from welfare programs and a culture of poverty by facilitating access to new work opportunities.

These cases show the need to rethink the financing of social policies from a broader perspective and to adopt a view centred on the user. Provision of social assistance from a supply side has proved to be ineffective because it tends to provoke program dependency. It is necessary to generate a capacity of demand in the civil society that makes possible the appropriation of programs by the target populations. Greater emphasis should also be placed on improving the incentive of social programs to facilitate social policies taking a preventive rather than simply an ameliorative or remedial approach. The financing of social policy should contribute to the sustainability of social service delivery by creating more responsibilities for beneficiaries, mutual obligations, and active rather than passive program participation.

Finally, there is also a need to understand the risks of indebtedness in financing social programs. Social investments using national resources or external funds is a topic that has received insufficient attention. There is a need to have better information about who will pay the costs of new debts that will result from implementing new social policies. What can be done to guarantee that new indebtedness will really represent eradication of poverty, strengthening capacity

for a more effective social policy implementation, and the attainment of social policy objectives rather than further bureaucracy and eventual corruption.

Social Policy Evaluation

Social policy reform will require close monitoring and evaluation to improve the prospect of meeting the most urgent social needs in Latin America and the central policy goals in Canada. Policy evaluation is a particularly important task where the content and direction of social reform are not yet clearly defined. What should be evaluated, what criteria should be used, and what purposes should be pursued in policy evaluation are some of the key questions. The evaluation of policies is indispensable in ensuring that the civil society plays a role in the follow up of institutional reforms and in identifying new financial arrangements for social service delivery. This, however, is not an easy task.

Similarly complex is the identification of what should be evaluated. A critical area for evaluation is policy integration and implementation at the micro level. Crucial aspects to consider are the institutional capacity for program coordination and the carrying out of social programs, the alternatives for more effective and efficient program delivery, the coordination modalities with local NGOs and the private-for-profit sector, and the alternatives for civil society participation in the policy process. At the macro level, there is a need to evaluate the impact of economic growth on equity and the impact of macroeconomic policies on the effectiveness of social policies.

Regarding the criteria that should be used for policy evaluation, it is often difficult to indicate ex-ante whether these should be related to the policy process, thus focusing on the institutional, legal, political, or financial dimensions of the decision-making framework, and to the target populations of policies and programs, or both, giving attention to aspects related to program relevance and effectiveness. The fluidity of current social policy and social reform processes raises the need for continuous evaluation to compensate for the limitations of ex-post facto evaluation. In the current context of globalization, evaluation becomes particularly difficult because the content of social policies tends to change as policies are implemented and as new social actors participate in the process of policymaking and implementation. For this reason, evaluation demands support

from research to understand the particulars of the impact of social policy on human development in the short, medium, and long term.

Finally, concerning the purposes of social policy evaluation, there is a wide range of possibilities. The most urgent evaluation need from the supply side is the assessment of policy coordination at the central government level and the development of a capacity for policy execution and integration at the local level. From the demand side, an evaluation priority at the micro level is to assess the performance of policies at the individual, family, household, and community level (Cohen, personal communication, 1994) by focusing on the participation and satisfaction levels of users.

Dealing With Uncertainty:

Research, Information, Training, and Policy Advice

The current uncertainty in the global society affecting the content, structure, and processes of social policy may be addressed by the generation and dissemination of relevant and timely knowledge. To this purpose, the sole identification of a research agenda is not sufficient. An integrated approach including research, information, training, and policy advice is required. This type of approach is necessary to design and implement effective policies in a new development context characterized by globalization and its effects on communication and information technologies, which have blurred boundaries between academic and applied knowledge, short- and long-term research, and policy analysis and advice. An integrated approach to both research and the generation of policies, may increase the likelihood of a greater impact on the policymaking process. An integrated approach to knowledge generation for social policymaking requires at least four interacting components: research, information, training, and policy advice.

Research

There are several questions that need to be addressed in relation to the content, outputs, and potential impact of social policy relevant research. Who is the audience and who are the clients of research? Are they other researchers and intellectuals, policymakers and program managers, community leaders, marginal

target groups, the general public? What is the vision of society behind the research agenda? Is the final purpose of research, for example, to increase the distributional effects of social policies, to improve transparency and accountability in the policymaking processes, and implementing to improve the learning capacities of the actors involved? How does a comprehensive research agenda apply to different countries? Is the purpose of research to obtain general knowledge, or to demonstrate viable new policy alternatives not necessarily replicable in other countries? How can research be democratized and made more participatory? Is this a matter of methods and techniques? What type of information and communication systems and tools should be involved? Are there critical gaps in the dissemination of research results? What is the time span necessary to obtain impact from the research results? Is there a need to rethink research products in terms of short, medium, and long term? (Bahamonde, personal communication, 1994).

The response to these questions, and the setting of research boundaries, will help to identify what "policy space" is available to design and implement social reforms. This is indispensable in efforts to identify the opportunities that research offers to improve the policymaking process by introducing a common understanding of social policy issues and a common language among researchers, policymakers, politicians, and other actors of the civil society.

In terms of the type and content of research, there is a need for a multidisciplinary approach that takes into account social, political, cultural, and economic factors to avoid highly descriptive, too specific, sectoral, or broad ideological social policy studies (Pfund, personal communication, 1994). Traditionally, resources including funding for conducting punctual, sectoral, and very specific research has not been a real limitation. To conduct the type of strategic research that is required today, however, there is a problem in the scarcity of both human and financial resources. It is this type of research that is required to respond to questions about the impact of social policies on development and to provide an overall evaluation of the social policy system.

With this in mind, the content of an agenda should indicate priority areas. The discussion in previous chapters indicates that social policies should be examined at least from four perspectives. The first is the interactions between

social policy, the social structure, and inequality. This implies giving special attention to the impact on social opportunities of variables, such as demographic changes, changes in family structure, the restructuring of labour markets, and new forms of social vulnerability. The second is the role of politics in shaping social policies. This includes the examination of users' perceptions, values, and responsibilities; the processes of public policy priority setting and the processes of decision-making; the linkages between social and economic policies; and the modalities for participation, consensus building, and conflict resolution affecting the design, implementation, and evaluation of social policies. The third is the institutional framework of social policies, which encompasses the study of sectoral reform processes (education, health, social security, etc.), the targeting of policies, privatization modalities, policy decentralization, and policy integration. The fourth is the role of operational strategies in social policy implementation, which include setting information systems, policy monitoring mechanisms, and policy evaluation systems.

Information

The second component is related to the need for information systems on the results of social policies as identified and evaluated by research. Information is necessary for adjusting social policies and actions as a means to increase effectiveness, efficiency, and accountability. Information should contribute to identifying for whom social policies are generated and for what purposes. This is fundamental for developing strategies for introducing key themes in the public agenda (Abugattás and Chateau, this volume). Information systems should report on the impact of policy systems and actions and contribute to the effectiveness of social policies in terms of their targets and beneficiaries.

To make social policy information systems accessible and useful to potential users, three issues are critical. First, information systems should be based on the identification and use of strategic social indicators and on the timely gathering of data to improve the capacity for targeting policies. In this regard, information for public awareness and for specific decisions requires special consideration (Durrant, this volume). This type of information is not easy to produce and access in part because of the weak capacity of target populations in

identifying their own needs. Two questions that must be addressed are: How can these groups be helped to identify needs and priorities and how can the more dispossessed get access to timely information and contribute to guiding decision-makers in policy areas that affect their lives directly?

A second issue is that in addition to the production, gathering, and retrieval of information, there are other crucial problems that relate to the use and the users of information. Given the difficulties in accessing new software and hardware, attention must be paid to the development of information systems accessible to grass-roots and popular organizations. This is a considerable challenge in dealing with the poorest and marginal groups because it means improving the access to equipment, documents, data delivery, and training in the use of resources and "repackaging" of information. "Repackaging" is one of the most strategic entry points to implementing information systems for social policies. It involves pulling together, sorting, analyzing, evaluating, abstracting, and synthesizing relevant information and data. It is perhaps the aspect most relevant to linking researchers and policymakers and to the marketing of information.

A third issue is how to avoid the reproduction of inequities within the information field. How, for example, can the distance between privileged in-groups and out-groups be avoided? In this regard, a number of aspects should be examined in relation to the equitable access to information. A critical topic is who will pay for the information services and systems (Wilson 1994).

Training

Research results and information are not fully useful unless they serve to generate capacities and learning skills. This leads to the third component, training. This should be a central concern in any research strategy given the scarcity of human resources. In part, the complexity of this component is a result of the variety of possible groups requiring training: researchers, policymakers, social policy managers, grass-root practitioners, and community leaders (Urzúa, this volume).

Although the purposes and content of training may vary widely, some general topics deserve mention. Training on social policy issues should generate the capacity to assess the social and political context of social policies; to get

acquainted with the local, national, and global trends that condition social policies; to collect and analyze information; to understand the criteria for choosing priorities; and to understand the costs and economic implications of social programs. The training of users of information, especially beneficiaries and actors in the social policy process, should merit special consideration.

Policy Advice

The outputs of research, information, and training will influence social policies if they can be transferred to, adopted, and used at the level of various policymaking structures and processes. Policy advice is a mechanism of innovation that embraces activities from the preparation of very specific consultancy reports to the introduction of policy issues into the public agenda. This is not a well known area of work, particularly among academic researchers. It is becoming important, however, under the current scarcity of research funds, in the active role of donors in defining the social policy agenda and in the need for practical and immediate knowledge inputs into the policymaking process. Policy advice requires special attention to improve the current decision-making process by introducing an integrated view of development problems and policy processes. To this end, policy advice requires appropriate support from research and information systems.

Social policy advice usually takes place in a context characterized by conflicting interests. How may objectivity be achieved? What are the opportunities for transferring useful and utilizable knowledge? How can advice be provided when conditions conducive to the exacerbation of social inequity and conflict persist? Appropriate social policy advice requires that special attention be given to issues such as social inequalities, social participation, social conflicts, the perceptions of the actors involved, ethics, and the needs of the more affected groups. This makes social policy advice a complex task requiring expertise that goes beyond disciplinary training (Abugattás and Chateau, this volume).

From the perspective of the policymaking process, policy advice is a means to introduce into the research, information, and training agendas the need to improve the decision-making process. Policy advice closes the circle in the production of knowledge. There is accumulated research experience in the anglo-saxon research tradition about models and processes for policy advice. More

research, however, is needed in Latin America to identified explanatory models of the decision-making process. There is a need for further research in this area to discover how knowledge can more effectively reduce uncertainty and enhance opportunities for effective social policy implementation and evaluation.

References

- Bahamonde, R. 1994. Personal communication. Policy and Planning Division, Americas Branch/BML, Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), 200 Promenade du Portage, Hull, Quebec, Canada K1A 0G4.
- Cohen, M. 1994. Personal communication. Transportation, Water and Urban Development Department, The World Bank, 1818 H Street, N.W., Washington, D.C., 20433, USA.
- Hakim, P.; Puryear, J.M. 1994. Discussion comments. Comments prepared at a meeting entitled Social policy in a global society: Parallels and lessons from the Canada-Latin America experience, held in Ottawa, Canada from 26 to 28 October 1994. International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Ottawa, ON, Canada. (Mimeo)
- Hunsley, T. 1994. Discussion comments. Comments prepared at a meeting entitled Social policy in a global society: Parallels and lessons from the Canada-Latin America experience, held in Ottawa, Canada from 26 to 28 October 1994. International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Ottawa, ON, Canada. (Mimeo)
- Kesselman, J. 1994. Discussion comments. Comments prepared at a meeting entitled Social policy in a global society: Parallels and lessons from the Canada-Latin America experience, held in Ottawa, Canada from 26 to 28 October 1994. International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Ottawa, ON, Canada. (Mimeo)
- Pfund, A. 1994. Personal communication. Evaluation Office, Inter-American Development Bank, 1300 New York Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20577, USA.
- Raczynski, D. 1994. Discussion comments. Comments prepared at a meeting entitled Social policy in a global society: Parallels and lessons from the Canada-Latin America experience, held in Ottawa, Canada from 26 to 28 October 1994. International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Ottawa, ON, Canada. (Mimeo)
- Vergara, C. 1994. Discussion comments. Comments prepared at a meeting entitled Social policy in a global society: Parallels and lessons from the Canada-Latin America experience, held in Ottawa, Canada from 26 to 28 October 1994. International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Ottawa, ON, Canada. (Mimeo)
- Wilson, M. 1994. Discussion comments. Comments prepared at a meeting entitled Social policy in a global society: Parallels and lessons from the Canada-Latin America experience, held in Ottawa, Canada from 26 to 28 October 1994. International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Ottawa, ON, Canada. (Mimeo)

101227

SOCIAL POLICY *in a* GLOBAL SOCIETY

Parallels and Lessons from the
Canada-Latin America Experience

EDITED BY
Daniel Morales-Gómez and Mario Torres A.

ARCHIV
MORALE
no. 30

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH CENTRE
Ottawa • Cairo • Dakar • Johannesburg • Montevideo
Nairobi • New Delhi • Singapore

Published by the International Development Research Centre
PO Box 8500, Ottawa, ON, Canada K1G 3H9

February 1995

Morales-Gómez, D.A.
Torres A., M.
IDRC, Ottawa, ON CA

Social policy in a global society : parallels and lessons from the Canada-Latin America experience. Ottawa, ON, IDRC, 1995. 282 p.

/Social policy/, /social development/, /social reform/, /Canada/, /Latin America/ — /Caribbean/, /policy making/, /economic resources/, /human resources/, /regional integration/, /social research/, /information technology/, /training/, /integrated development/, /comparative analysis/, /conference reports/, references.

UDC: 304 (71:8)

ISBN 0-88936-761-2

A microfiche edition is available.

Material contained in this report is produced as submitted and has not been subjected to peer review or editing by IDRC Books staff. Unless otherwise stated, copyright for material in this report is held by the authors. Mention of a proprietary name does not constitute endorsement of the product and is given only for information.

IDRC's Focus Series presents research results and scholarly studies from the Centre's six core themes of program support.



The cover illustration represents *Integration of environmental, social, and economic policies*. This theme aims at integrating factors that are too often analyzed in isolation from one another, and at strengthening policy-making capacity in developing countries by deepening the understanding of how these factors are interrelated.



Contents

Foreword: Social Policy in a Global Society — <i>Caroline Pestieau</i>	v
Acknowledgments	ix
Introduction: Development and Social Reform in the Context of Globalization — <i>Daniel A. Morales-Gómez</i>	1

Part I. Social Policy Reform in Canada

Social Policy Challenges in a Global Society — <i>Keith Banting</i>	31
Establishing an Effective Social Policy Agenda with Constrained Resources — <i>Peter Hicks</i>	63
Social Policy Reform in Canada Under Regional Economic Integration — <i>Albert Berry</i>	83

Part II. Social Policy in Latin America

Social Policy in Latin America — <i>Carlos Filgueira and Mario Lombardi</i>	123
Role of Information in Social Policymaking: Latin America and the Caribbean — <i>Fay Durrant</i>	171
Training Requirements for Social Policymaking: Latin America — <i>Raúl Urzúa</i>	201
Role of Integrated Social Policy Advice — <i>Javier Abugattás and Jorge Chateau</i>	227
Conclusion: Social Policy in a Time of Uncertainty — <i>Mario Torres A.</i>	243
Appendix 1: The Contributors	263
Appendix 2: List of Participants	269
Appendix 3: Acronyms and Abbreviations	279